

Council of Michigan Dental Specialties (CMDs)

The CMDs is a collaborative group of the various state dental specialty organizations. As each specialty deals in great depth with their specific part of the spectrum of dental care, we have a unique perspective on legislative and interdisciplinary dental concerns. By coming together on a regular basis to discuss these areas, we can often find solutions to common problems.

What are dental specialists?

Dental specialists dedicate their practice to one specific area of dentistry. All dental specialists must first become dentists. After completion of their dental degree, they pursue an additional 2-5 years of full time formal education in their specialty area, often resulting in the achievement of an additional graduate degree (such as an M.S. or an M.D.). Once they establish practice as a dental specialist, they no longer provide routine family dental care like standard cleanings and fillings. Much of their practice is referral-based, meaning patients are sent to them from their regular family dentist for one procedure only. Once the specialty work is completed, the patient returns to the care of their family dentist.

What types of specialists are there in Michigan? And how many are there?

(a) Oral and maxillofacial surgery (234 licensed in Michigan)

Providing cleft lip/palate surgery, head/neck/oral cancer treatment, dental and soft tissue surgery, dental implant surgery, administration of anesthesia, wisdom teeth management, treatment of facial injuries, corrective jaw surgery, TMJ and facial pain treatment

(b) Orthodontics or orthodontics and dentofacial orthopedics (347 licensed in Michigan)

Prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of facial and dental irregularities, such as malocclusions (bad bites). There are many debilitating problems associated with malocclusion, such as speech defects, difficulties chewing and difficulty maintaining adequate oral hygiene.

(c) Prosthodontics (57 licensed in Michigan)

Advanced restoration or replacement of missing tooth structures, including crowns, bridges, veneers, inlays, onlays, dental implants, complete and partial dentures. Complex cases often involve multiple missing teeth, cases in which the majority of the dentition must be reconstructed, or those in which a portion of the supporting jaw bone is missing (typically after cancer treatment or traumatic injury).

(d) Periodontics (166 licensed in Michigan)

Prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of complicated inflammatory periodontal (gum) disease. Periodontists focus on oral reconstruction of lost and/or diseased structures leading to bone and soft tissue grafts and placement of dental implants. Their patients often have a more complex medical and dental history than the average dental patient.

(e) Pediatric dentistry (145 licensed in Michigan)

Primary oral care providers for infants and children through adolescence, including those with special health needs. Pediatric dentists provide care in both dental office and hospital settings, in conjunction with an anesthesiologist when needed.

(f) Endodontics (178 licensed in Michigan)

Diagnosis and treatment of pain originating in the tooth root or dental pulp (nerve). These procedures can include root canal therapy, nonsurgical treatment of root canal systems, intentional replantation and replantation of avulsed (knocked out) teeth, surgical removal of a portion of the tooth (such as root amputation), and retreatment of teeth previously treated endodontically.

(g) Oral pathology or oral and maxillofacial pathology (7 licensed in Michigan)

Diagnosis and study of the causes and effects of diseases affecting the mouth, the jaws and the face. It can be considered a specialty of both dentistry and pathology.

This totals 1134 dental specialists. Since dental specialists must hold both a dental license and a dental specialty license, they account for almost 15% of the 7680 licensed dentists in Michigan.